

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 18TH-19TH, 2026 //BOOK OF ACTS

LISTENING (ACTS 8:26-29)

FIFTY MILES SOUTHWEST OF JERUSALEM

After Peter and John met up with Philip in Samaria, an "angel of the Lord spoke to Philip" and told him to go to Gaza. This account contrasts the disobedience of Jonah and the rapid response of a Spirit-filled Philip.

- This isn't a knock on the OT leaders but an example of how the Spirit empowers us.

A SINGLE TARGET

The target wasn't Gaza but a well-respected Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah on his way home from worshipping in Jerusalem.

- Eunuchs were men who were born with physical defects, voluntarily castrated, or celibate. They often held high offices and guarded royal women.

"GO AND JOIN THAT CHARIOT"

Philip was obviously sensitive to listening to God, and though eunuchs were limited in their participation in the temple, that limitation didn't stop this man from listening and learning more about God and His promises for all people.

- **If we don't look, we will never find, but the opposite is also true.** Are we searching?

RESPONDING (ACTS 8:30-40)

THINGS HAPPEN WHEN WE RESPOND

Philip was humble and listened to the Spirit, but **listening without responding produces nothing** (James 1). Philip then approached the chariot and engaged in conversation.

- Like Philip, we need to **be humble, listen, and keep our eyes open for opportunities to help people in their search for truth.**

"HOW CAN I...UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME?"

The eunuch was humble enough to admit he needed help, and he invited Philip "to come up and sit with him."

- The Bible will lead us to truth, but **God has also designed us to walk in relationships that sharpen (Proverbs 27:17), encourage (Hebrews 3:13), and give us accountability.**

THE OLD POINTS TOWARDS THE NEW

The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53, a blatant prophecy about Jesus and the crucifixion. He asked Philip who this passage was referring to, opening the door for the gospel.

- We are to demonstrate Jesus, but we are also to **know the Word enough to share what Jesus has done and how we fit into that.**

OBDIENCE IN BAPTISM

Philip clearly understood that **baptism follows faith**, so he mentioned this to the Ethiopian. At some point after this, they spotted some water, and the eunuch instantly wanted to be baptized.

- Luke emphasizes baptism and the going into and coming out of water. This coincides with Romans 6 and the powerful act of baptism.

"CARRIED PHILIP AWAY"

After the baptism, Luke says that the Spirit "carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer." Then, Philip "appeared in Azotus," 30 miles away, and travelled to Caesarea.

- Some view this as a quick departure, but most theologians believe this was a miraculous teleportation.

ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE

At this point we've seen Jesus, via the Church, reach occultist Samaritans and a Gentile, African eunuch.

This shows **God will save anyone willing to humble themselves to Him.**

- **If God desires everyone's salvation (2 Peter 3:9), the Church should welcome anyone who wants to hear the truth.**

CHANGE OF PLANS (ACTS 9:1-9)

PAN OVER TO SAUL

Saul took his persecution of Christians out of Jerusalem and into the neighboring towns. He got permission from synagogues in Damascus to imprison anyone who was part of "the Way."

- Many Christians fled to Damascus in Syria. It was a very influential city, and Saul didn't want Christianity to take root there.

KNOCKED ON HIS BUTT

After a nearly six-day trip, Saul was almost to Damascus when "a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him," and he "[fell] to the ground" and "heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'"

- Jesus was about to **take a road to destruction and redirect it to salvation.**

NO ORDINARY LIGHT

The light Saul experienced was significant. It was midday, so the physical effect on Saul is understandable because the light must have been more brilliant than the sun.

- To a devout Jew, hearing a voice would have obviously been God (Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, etc.).

"WHO ARE YOU, LORD?"

Saul assumed this was God speaking but asked just to make sure. Imagine his shock and horror when God responded, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting."

- Saul's aggression was aimed at people who claimed the divinity and resurrection of Jesus. Now, he had to face that reality.

WE WILL ALL HAVE TO FACE THAT REALITY

Though it may not be as drastic as Saul's experience, we are all presented with the truth of Jesus. **If we reject that truth, we still have to face the reality of it before we enter into eternity** (Isaiah 45, Phil. 2).

- **Everyone will give an account for their life, and Jesus is the only pathway to eternal life.**

"GET UP AND GO INTO THE CITY"

Jesus tells Saul he "will be told what [he] must do." Jesus was going to give Saul a new identity, faith, view of Scripture, and a **new perspective and mission in life.**

- Though Saul's companions could only hear the voice but not see Jesus, they did see their ruthless leader become helpless.

SIGHT (ACTS 9:10-19)

"THERE WAS A DISCIPLE...NAMED ANANIAS"

Instead of sending Saul back to Jerusalem for a public declaration of conversion, God sent him to the home of a humble follower.

- Ananias also heard from Jesus to "get up and...go to the house of Judas" and find Saul. Once there, he was to pray that Saul "may regain his sight."

SAUL WAS TRULY A SPECIAL CASE

Notice that Peter and John are not involved in this situation. We will learn later that Paul never had a super close connection with the church in Jerusalem.

- **The aim of Christ is less about church culture and more about the salvation and sanctification of people.**

WE ARE STILL HUMANS

Ananias was reluctant but willing. He had heard how terrible Saul had been, but Jesus assured him this was His plan.

- **Jesus doesn't promise ease or comfort** but that He will take care of us. **We will be afraid at times, but if we keep leaning on Him, we will accomplish His will.**

"CHOSEN INSTRUMENT"

Jesus was about to expand how the church would grow. Saul, a terror to Christians, would be the chosen means by which the gospel would reach the non-Jewish world.

- **Saul's salvation was unmerited, but his mission would come at a price.** He would "suffer for [Jesus'] name."

"SOMETHING LIKE SCALES FELL FROM HIS EYES"

After Ananias prayed for Saul, he regained his **sight**, was **filled with the Holy Spirit**, and was **baptized**. He was then able to eat and drink, which gave him **strength**.

- **If we recognize truth and obey, we will be saved and given the Spirit. Through prayer and ingesting the Word, we grow strong.**

LOOKING AND LISTENING

- The eunuch didn't know the full truth yet, but he was actively searching. Jesus said that if we seek, we will find (Matthew 7:7). **Are we seeking truth and asking questions?**
- Philip and Ananias were actively listening, and God used them for great things. **Are we taking the time to be still and listen?**

RESPONSE AND INITIATIVE

- Looking and listening are of no value if we do nothing with the information. **Are we "doers of the Word," not just "hearers?"**
- We often wait on Jesus to do everything, but we are called to **work hard** (Proverbs 10); **to be attentive and educated** (Matthew 24; 1 Peter 3), and to calculate and plan (Luke 14).

SEEING

- When we find truth, obey, ingest the Bible, and pray to Jesus, we are given direction in life that sustains us until the afterlife.
- **We need God's help to endure this life.** The Spirit gives us **wisdom, counsel, love, comfort, peace,** and even **joy** as we live out His will and anticipate eternity.